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FM AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 2781
INFO RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE
RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE
RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 2914
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 5170
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 2779
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 3414
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 3531
RHMFIUU/CDR USCENCOM MACDILL AFB FL
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 ASHGABAT 000578

SENSITIVE

SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCA/CEN, SCA/PPD, IIP, ECA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [SCUL](#) [KPAO](#) [TX](#)

SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: MEDIA REACTION ON APRIL POST EVENTS

REF: (A) Ashgabat 562 (B) Ashgabat 518

11. (U) Sensitive but unclassified. Not for public Internet.

12. (U) SUMMARY: In addition to coverage of visits by Assistant Secretary Richard Boucher and DAS George Krol in April (Refs A and B), April saw media provide generally accurate and favorable coverage of numerous U.S. visitors and Post-conducted events. Western websites highlighted the visit to the United States of a Turkmen TV crew as part of the "TV CO-OP" program. State and international media covered the early April visit by Director of the Office of Policy and Evaluation of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs Rick Ruth, who came to monitor the progress of joint projects implemented in Turkmenistan under "Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation" (AFCP). Media gave favorable coverage of USAID activities in Turkmenistan. State media also gave accurate coverage of the visit of the President of Eurasia Foundation for Central Asia, Jeff Erlich. END SUMMARY.

U.S. GOVERNMENT WEBSITE HIGHLIGHTS TURKMEN TV CREW'S VISIT TO USA
UNDER TV CO-OP PROGRAM

13. (U) On April 2, "Media-NewsWire.com" (English) issued a press release about the TV crew from Turkmenistan visiting Texas A&M University. The release accurately outlined the purpose of the visit and highlighted the previous Texas A&M partnership with Turkmen State University, noting the efforts of Turkmenistan's Ambassador to the United States to reestablish educational exchanges with Turkmenistan. On April 11, the "US Fed News" (English) reprinted the same article.

MEDIA HIGHLIGHT TURKMENISTAN AND USA COOPERATION IN CULTURE

14. (U) On April 4, the government-run website "Turkmenistan Golden Age" (www.turkmenistan.gov.tm) (Turkmen, Russian and English) posted an accurate article on ECA's Rick Ruth who made site visits to Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation (AFCP) projects. The article praised significant contributions by the United States to preserve Turkmenistan's cultural heritage. The story gave a broad description of completed and ongoing projects in Turkmenistan under AFCP. On April 6, state-run dailies "Neutral Turkmenistan" (Russian, circ. 47,091) and "Turkmenistan" (Turkmen, circ. 36,091) reprinted the same article from the web on their front pages. The

same day, Russian "RIA OREANDA" (English) Azeri News agency "Trend" (English, Russian), "TURKMENinform" (Russian), and "The Times of Central Asia" (English) carried similar stories on Ruth's visit based on the state media source. An April 4 story on "Turkmenistan" TV channel (Russian, Turkmen, English, Chinese, Arabic, Persian, French) accurately highlighted interview remarks with Ruth and his program in the country. Ruth spoke about AFCP projects in general and praised the close cultural cooperation between the U.S. and Turkmenistan. On April 6, RFE/RL's Turkmen Broadcast aired an accurate interview piece with Rick Ruth, where he again outlined AFCP projects in Turkmenistan.

INTERNATIONAL WEBSITES HIGHLIGHT USAID SUPPORT FOR TURKMEN YOUTH

15. (U) On April 16, Azeri News agency "Trend" (Russian) posted the Embassy press release on USAID support for Turkmen Youth to participate in International economics simulation contest. On April 18, the "US Fed News" (English) reprinted the same press release.

EURASIA FOUNDATION VISIT RECEIVES STATE MEDIA COVERAGE

16. (U) On April 14, "Watan" TV evening news program (Turkmen) carried an accurate story on the visit by President of Eurasia Foundation for Central Asia, Jeff Erlich, highlighting his government meetings. On April 19, "Turkmenistan" TV channel (Russian, Turkmen, English, Chinese, Arabic, Persian, French) aired an accurate interview with Erlich, in which he fully introduced the Eurasia Foundation and its goals. The program emphasized the Foundation's aim to cooperate with Turkmenistan in business, oil and gas, specialist training and other areas.

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STATE TV CHANNEL PRAISES USAID/IFRS TRAINING CENTER

17. (U) On April 19, state "Altyn Asyr" TV channel (Turkmen) carried a long and accurate story about the IFRS (International Financial Reporting Standards) training center at the Supreme Council for Science and Technology of Turkmenistan, which was opened last year by USAID. The story included interview remarks by some of the state university professors, who had been taking IFRS courses at the center, and mainly carried archived video from the center's opening ceremony in 2008. The professors stressed the importance of the center for Turkmen specialists, and praised the role of USAID in organizing trainings, carrying projects in healthcare and education systems of Turkmenistan. (NOTE: Per usual practice, interviewees first expressed their thanks to the President of Turkmenistan, giving him the credit for creation of the center. END NOTE).

U.S. CHARGE D'AFFAIRES SPEAKS IN STATE TV CULTURAL PROGRAM

18. (U) On April 29, "Turkmenistan" TV channel (Russian, Turkmen, English, Chinese, Arabic, Persian, French) carried accurate interview remarks in Russian by U.S. Charge d'Affaires Richard Miles at an exhibition of art by a Turkmen artist.

ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE RICHARD BOUCHER'S PRESS-CONFERENCE RECEIVES STATE TV COVERAGE

19. (U) On April 30, "Turkmenistan" TV channel (Russian, Turkmen, English, Chinese, Arabic, Persian, French) carried an accurate story on Assistant Secretary Richard Boucher's visit. Even though the broadcast appeared much later than the visit, the story highlighted A/S Boucher's session with students at the Institute of International Relations of Turkmenistan and a press-conference with media. The story also included Boucher's accurate interview remarks from the Institute and highlights of his opening remarks from the press-conference. Also see reftel B.

STATE MEDIA COVERS THE VISIT OF DEPUTY ASSISTANT U.S. TRADE REPRESENTATIVE

110. (U) On April 29, "Watan" TV evening news program (Turkmen) carried a short, accurate video report on the meetings of the Deputy Assistant U.S. Trade Representative for South and Central Asia, Mr. Claudio Lilienfeld with government officials. On May 4,

"Turkmenistan" TV channel (Russian, Turkmen, English, Chinese, Arabic, Persian, French) carried an interview with Mr. Lilienfeld, who talked about expanding cooperation in trade and investment with Turkmenistan, and noted the willingness of U.S. companies to invest in the country. The same day, RFE/RL Turkmen Broadcast aired an accurate interview piece with Lilienfeld, who explained the purpose of his visit and talked about the U.S.-Turkmenistan economic relationship.

¶11. (SBU) COMMENT: During April, State TV continued close cooperation with post in covering U.S. visitors or programs, including seeking clarifications in order to provide accurate coverage. Post observed that some state journalists ask more varied questions and have presented stories in a slightly more modern way. This may be the influence of a BBC training program with the Ministry of Culture's journalists. Surprisingly, one print article on Rick Ruth's visit apparently was written based on state TV coverage alone. Overall, state media has shown slightly improved efforts to obtain accurate information and to cover U.S. events and programs favorably, including acknowledgement of U.S. assistance.
END COMMENT.

MILES